

2015 Biological Survey of Canada Bio-Blitz: Peace Region, British Columbia June 22-26



Photo: Heidi Gartner

You are invited to participate in the 11th Biological Survey of Canada (BSC) Bio-Blitz on June 22-26, 2015. This Bio-Blitz is co-organized by the BSC, Royal BC Museum and Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative (Y2Y).

The Peace Region is the traditional territory of the Treaty 8 First Nations and is one of the most biologically fascinating areas of British Columbia. It is a crossroads of biotas, lying between the eastern prairies and boreal forest and the western mountains, and between the southern Cordillera and the Beringian mountains of the far northwest. The Peace River pre-dates the Rockies, so has long provided a corridor between east and west. The close proximity of prairie grassland, aspen parkland, southern boreal forest, riparian woodland, large and small rivers and streams, a variety of wetlands, and subalpine and alpine habitats in the Rocky Mountains adds up to a spectacular region for a BioBlitz. There are a number of endemic species and subspecies in the region as well; these apparently originated in unglaciated areas along the dry east slopes of the Rockies in the late Pleistocene.

Over the next decade, the region is expected to experience a significant transformation due to major expansions in the energy sector, including the proposed construction of the Site C hydroelectric dam. The Site C Dam has been given approval by the B.C. government, and will flood more than 80 linear km and



Source: <http://www.david.suzuki.org/blogs/panther-lounge/images/Peace%20map.png>

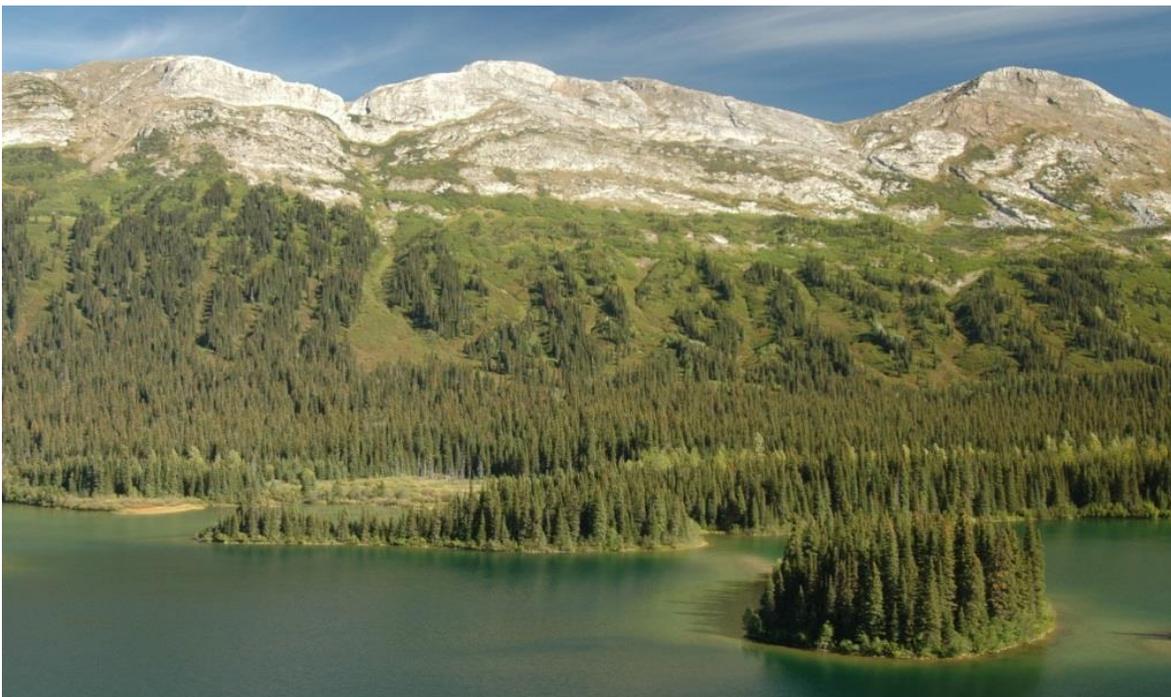
5,550 hectares of river valley in the Peace region, resulting in significant environmental changes. Assuming development proceeds, this project would forever change the natural landscapes – not just in the area of the flood zone, but also in the surrounding and downstream areas. Sites A and B were built without detailed study and without comprehensive collections of specimens. We have advance warning and should use this time wisely to systematically document the biota for posterity and public benefit.

Despite its diversity and biogeographic value, The Peace River Region is one of the most underrepresented regions in existing collections, making up less than 1% of the Royal British Columbia Museum Natural History Collection. Previous surveys conducted by consultants have not been comprehensive and voucher material has not been properly deposited in museums in all cases. In 2013, Entomology and Invertebrate staff sampled in the proposed flood zone over a five day period, collecting more than 1,800 individual dry specimens and 250 lots of wet specimens. Preliminary results already suggest significant findings, including undescribed species, new records for BC and Canada, and geographic range extensions.



Photo: Jenny Heron

For those whose sampling interests lie at elevations other than the floodplain and grasslands, there exists the possibility of visiting higher elevation sites, including those with Beringian species (e.g. *Parnassius evermanni*). Just three hours to the south or north are Pine Pass/Azouzetta Lake and Pink Mountain, respectively.



Pine Pass/Azouzetta Lake Photo: Syd Cannings



Photo: Jenny Heron

An expedition to the Peace River Valley will significantly enhance museum collections by filling existing gaps, and facilitate current and future research projects.

If you are not able to join us from June 22-26 or your taxon of interest is better collected at another time, you are still welcome to come to this region and sample. We are expecting to offer several options for campers, including free camping on private land. For those desiring hotel accommodations, the nearest towns are Chetwynd, Hudson's Hope, and Fort St. John. Boats will be provided to allow access to more remote areas along the Peace River.

An added attraction is the Global Geopark Inauguration that will be taking in nearby Tumbler Ridge on June 28th and 29th, 2015. A Geopark is an area recognized by the Global Geoparks Network with geological heritage of international significance and is supported by UNESCO. Significant finds of dinosaur bones and trackways have been made in the Tumbler Ridge area in recent years, and are displayed in the town's Dinosaur Discovery Gallery. More information on the Geopark can be found at <http://www.trmf.ca/geopark.html>.

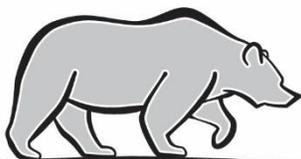
If you would like to participate in this exciting Bio-Blitz opportunity, please let us know by **June 15**. Please inform us of: your taxon of interest (from bacteria to bears), dates that you expect to be there, and whether you prefer camping space. Also please contact us if you have additional questions. Please plan to join us in this beautiful part of Canada to sample an area rich in species and scenery.

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Biological Survey of Canada

Commission biologique du Canada



Yellowstone to Yukon
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